

in your hands by MJosephine10

Category: Stranger Things - Fandom

Genre: F/M, but the image came to me and wouldn't leave my head, etc - Freeform, i haven't finished season 2 i don't know how they actually break up but i want something like this!, pain ahead, this is pure angst i know

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Summary:

It only takes one moment for a heart to break.

in your hands

Author's Note:

- For [TolkienGirl](#).

The universe isn't always kind enough to send you a sign that your world is about to end. It's not the job of clouds, sunshine, children playing in the street, or music playing to warn you that your heart's about to break. And anyway, how could anything prepare you? All tragedies, all heartbreaks happen in the span of a second, dividing the past from the present in one unmistakably present, crystal clear line that severs your life- neat in its cruelty - into "before and after". What is, could be, preparation for that? After it happens you see it everywhere. You see your heartbreak in every ordinary detail of your world, mocking you, closing in on you, surrounding you, impenetrable and inescapable. Everything speaks of it after, nothing warns you before. This is the nature of heartbreak.

Steve had no idea his world was about to end because there were no signs. Dinner had gone well. The food was good, the restaurant quietly familiar. Nancy had been calmer than usual. She was a little pensive, but that was something of a relief compared to the contradictory and frightening outbursts of the past weeks.

They drove home from the restaurant in an easy silence in the dusk of an October evening. The first stars were glittering on the horizon, piercings of white light against a deepening blue. As he pulled up in front of her house, he let himself breathe an inner sigh of relief.

It had been so hard these past few weeks. There had been moments, terrifying and tiny moments that rent his heart, when Nancy had seemed so far away from him even when she was right in front of him. Even when she was in his arms, even when her hands were in his.

He shook away the thoughts. Things were going to be fine.

"Steve?" Nancy's voice cut through the silence, quiet and tentative. He turned to face her, not aware as he did so that his face lit up and

softened at the same time. He was aware that his heart rose up at the sound of her voice, but then it always did.

"What's up, Nance?" he said reaching for her hand instinctively. (It was second nature to him now.)

She took a deep breath and shifted in her seat to meet his gaze more fully. Her eyes met his frankly, clear and straightforward and calmer than they'd been in months. But sad too, achingly sad. Sad in a way he hadn't seen in months. Sad and determined. Her hands felt firm in his grasp.

Wait no-

Two thoughts shot through him at the same time. One: Nancy's new haircut was perfect. She'd cut it this summer and been unsatisfied with it for a while, worried it made her look too young. She was wrong. It was perfect, drawing out the innocence in her eyes while tying together the sharpness and softness of her features. The chestnut waves framed her face in a way he knew he could never forget.

The other was that she was about to break his world apart.

He didn't know which one hurt him the most.

He had trouble breathing, and he felt his hand grow cold in her grasp.

"I don't think that we're...I don't think." She spoke slowly. He could feel her hesitation, see the pain her eyes, the pity. But that wasn't what was clutching his heart like an iron vise. It wasn't what was restricting the air to his lungs.

The cause of that was a steadiness behind her eyes. And the way she was holding his hand. It was a grip that was firmer and surer than any he'd ever known.

Nancy was rarely sure, hardly ever steady.

That she was so sure cut him to his core.

All of this flashed through his mind in a matter of seconds. He forced himself to focus his attention to her voice. She'd been talking this whole time.

He couldn't focus, no matter how hard he tried. He heard only flashes of it. She wanted to be honest with him... He deserved someone better... It was the usual break up fare but he knew even through the haze wrapped around his mind- the natural result of self-preservation- that the worst thing about it was that she meant every word.

She wasn't trying to hurt him. She didn't want to be cruel. This was just how it went.

He looked down at his hands still in hers. He had reached for her first but now she was holding his hands so tightly he knew he couldn't let go if he wanted to. He didn't know if he wanted to or not. Mute misery threatened to choke him, but something kept him still breathing. Small at first, but growing with every second.

He couldn't speak or listen but he could sit here and hold her hands and know that his world was ending but that it didn't matter because it's what she wanted.

That was what he was here for right? To make her happy. To give her what she wanted, even if what she wanted was not him.

That was what he would always do for her. He could say he had no choice because he loved her, but he knew he did have a choice. And the choice he would always make, instinctively, immediately was to love her.

Slowly the warmth returned to his hands. He strengthened his grip, returning her pressure as comfortably as he knew how. He knew this wasn't easy for her.

Nancy finished talking. Her voice faded out.

"Steve..."

There were tears in her eyes now. Her face was anxious, pleading with him to say something and end his silence. To let her know that

he was okay.

He wasn't okay, but she didn't need to know that.

"Nancy,"

He tried to speak through the tears choking his voice. He didn't trust himself to be able to. Besides, what was there to say? She didn't love him but he loved her and that was how it was and would always be. What was there to say? There was everything and nothing. He chose nothing.

Instead, he untangled their hands and lifted one to his lips, pressing a kiss there that said everything he couldn't.

Before he let go of her hand, he looked at her one last time, memorizing the lines of her face, the tears in her eyes, knowing he would take her everywhere he went for the rest of his life though he doubted she would do the same.

He watched her gather her things and leave, listened to her final words of worry and of pain, watched her walk sadly up the drive to her house all while knowing she would be okay. Would he? That didn't matter, he reminded himself. Nothing to do with him mattered at all. He drove home under the brightness of an October moon, shadows from the trees stretching long and cruel beside his moving car.

Hours later, he could still feel the pressure of her hand, warm against his.